



28 October 2004



## **SAFETY ALERT**

### **Family Member Killed in Motorcycle Crash**

1. The motorcycle carnage continues. A family member who was a licensed motorcycle rider died on Autobahn 63 last Saturday afternoon when he lost control of his bike while traveling at a high rate of speed. He was reported to be an experienced rider, as was the Soldier whose death was described in Bell Sends Message 20-04. He had recently received his bike from the States. At the time of the crash, he was riding with a group of bikers in a posted speed-controlled area. Reportedly, his speed was in excess of 200 kph in an 80 kph zone. This report is yet to be verified in the investigation. He leaves behind a wife and two young children.
2. The crash is currently under investigation. At this time, we can only review and reemphasize the safety lessons we have learned from similar tragedies in the past.
  - Speed limits are set based on risks identified by authorities responsible for the roads. These limits are lower in certain areas because of risks that are often not immediately obvious to drivers. Vehicle operators must operate within posted speed limits.
  - Time and experience are needed to fully adjust to the controls and the “feel” of a vehicle. Whether you are operating a new or rental vehicle, or a vehicle that you have not used in awhile, take time to get used to it in a low-risk environment. Drivers should be especially careful when “stepping up” in bike or vehicle performance level.
  - Group dynamics can involve powerful psychological stimuli that are not easy to counteract. When traveling as part of a group, people can easily lose their identity, while gaining a feeling of power and immunity to danger. When this happens, they may be tempted to show off and take risks as they try to outdo each other.
  - Personnel who organize off-duty trips involving multiple vehicles should follow the military convoy risk-assessment and management procedures in AE Pamphlet 385-15 and AE Pamphlet 385-15-1. The “senior occupant” and “convoy commander” concepts for maintaining vehicle discipline, as outlined in Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3, apply to off-duty travel as well.
  - Our *Under the Oak Tree* policy concepts are as valid for family members as they are for Soldiers. Sponsors should consider adopting a similar risk-identification and management program for their families.

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- Whether riding a bike or driving an automobile, it is imperative to use protective equipment. Motorcycles offer riders essentially no physical protection. A helmet, motorcycle leathers, boots, and reflective markings are required and can save your life. When traveling by automobile, be sure to use seatbelts, whether you are in the front or rear seat. You can greatly reduce the likelihood of dying in an accident by simply buckling up.

3. On 22 October 2004, I provided senior commanders and other leaders the most recent Army Safety Center vehicle-fatality analysis. This analysis shows that people who habitually drive or ride at speeds inappropriate for the conditions (which is not always the same as the speed limit) and those who show off—such as by doing “wheelies” on the road—are high-risk individuals. These individuals inevitably crash their vehicles and are often seriously injured or killed. I expect leaders to identify these individuals and take appropriate steps to modify their high-risk behavior, to include taking appropriate administrative or disciplinary action to hold them accountable for their actions when warranted.

4. Whether you are a Soldier, civilian, or family member, each of you is an important part of this great team. Be safe. We need every one of you as we continue to execute with excellence, Any Mission, Anywhere.



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General, USA  
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